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A study was made of personal changes in 50 graduate students in education, public health, social work, psychology, business administration, and public administration, and public administration who took a special 15-week university course in adult education methodology. Major course objectives were to help class members (1) to see themselves as able to aid other adults in their learning, problem-solving, and decision-making, and (2) to perceive other adults as having the potential and basic desire to take responsibility for their own learning and development and behave constructively toward others. Learning events involved the total group, ad hoc subunits, permanent "home-based" groups, permanent out of class triads, individual outside reading of distributed articles and self-chosen books, individual and small group consultation, and ad hoc work committees. Gains in positive self-perception and in readiness to share leadership with others were significant; the influence of self-perception on changes in readiness to share leadership were not significant. (References are included.) (ly)

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A STUDY OF PERCEPTUAL AND ATTITUDINAL CHANGE WITHIN A COURSE ON ADULT EDUCATION METHODS

A report on the participative methods employed to induce personal change in a university class for adult education practitioners, the pre-post data collection instruments used to measure change, a new statistical procedure for measuring change, and the findings of the study.

National Seminar on Adult Education Research February 10, 1969

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Major course objectives were to help class members achieve two perceptual-attitudinal changes:

1. To perceive self as one who has abilities at helping other adults in their learning, problem-solving, and decision-making.

2. To perceive other adults as people who have the potential and the basic desire to take responsibility for their own learning and development and behave constructively toward others.

Class Population:

50 graduate students in Education, Public Health, Social Work, Psychology, Business Administration, and Publid Administration.

Number of Sessions:

15 weekly two-hour sessions.

Description of the Course Experience

An image of the learning experience might best be provided here by identifying the general nature of the subject matter and portraying the kinds of in-class and out-of-class activities which served as vehicles for communicating and developing self-relevancy of the subject matter.

The subject matter centered around several basic areas including: the nature and meaning of an educative experience; comparative values, objectives, ethics, and outcomes of differing social climates and styles of helping; the social, clinical, and educational psychology of the adult teaching-learning transaction and process of planned change; the essential conditions for the achievement of adult learning and change; specific methods and techniques for the implementation of essential conditions for learning and change within agency, institutional, and community settings. The designs for learning this subject matter always involved some participative, problem-oriented, interactive experience. The subject matter was developed inductively and deductively as the class

sequentially moved through jointly formulated questions concerning: the interpersonal, mechanical, and pedagogical problems in small groups; the planning and staging of well-defined learning events in large groups; and the management of particular barriers to maximal helping in consultative and supervisory relationships.

The learning activities were organized to maximize the number, variation, and depth of contacts between class members in order to increase the sharing of the wide range of informational and personal resources that existed within the class membership. Also, an attempt was made to invent and employ a wide variety of methods and techniques throughout the course as the major means of helping class members examine, question, and build a personal repertoire of methods for immediate and future back-home experimentation. Learning events were planned for total group; ad hoc sub-units of varying size within the total group in the same room, as well as in separate rooms; permanent "home-based" groups; permanent out-of-class triads; individual out-of-class reading of distributed articles and self-selected books; available individual and small group consultation with the instructor and other available faculty members; and ad hoc work committees to explore administrative and maintenance problems of the total class.

The events within the total group, as total group or in temporary sub-units consisted of such things as a ten-minute presentation of an "action-implying conceptualization" of theory; translation of conceptualizations into more concrete behavioral terms

through skill-practice exercises and demonstrations; role-playing alternative solutions to problem situations; group process examination exercises; films with follow-up activities; inter-group decision-making and problem-solving confrontations on value-loaded issues; shared planning through problem census; and opportunities to ventilate and work through resistances to learning and to methods of class operation.

To describe more clearly the nature of the subject matter presented within the total group, a definition of the term "action-implying conceptualization" may be helpful. Most simply stated, an action-implying conceptualization is a visual means of representing a piece of knowledge so as to shorten the distance between that piece of knowledge and its utilization. It is usually a formulation of some theory, proposition, or notion into a format which is highly suggestive of particular action. An example of the several action-implying conceptualizations used in the course is:

$$\text{Constructive Participation} = \text{Feeling of Security} = \frac{\text{One's perception of his own value} + \text{His perception of friendly forces}}{\text{His perception of unfriendly forces}}$$

This is a concretized representation of the proposition that people who are experiencing feelings of security are more likely to be constructively participative in a group than people experiencing anxiety; and further, that people derive feelings of security from perceptions of both self-validity and supportiveness in others. Represented as a formula, the proposition's action-taking implications for the practitioner appear more obvious. If he wishes to

increase the likelihood of constructive participation within the group, then he needs to do those kinds of things which increase the numerator and decrease the denominator.

Home-based groups of twelve to thirteen members were organized on the basis of maximum heterogeneity. Each group had one member who had volunteered to receive outside-of-class training in group leadership. At each of the home-based group sessions, he helped the group convene, clarify the task at hand, learn to supply its own leadership services, and, at times, observe and analyze its own process and work relationships. Some of the activities involved the use of tape recorded case studies, knowledge-conveying film strips with assigned dimensions of observation, further treatment of information or events experienced within the total group, and sub-groups precisely planning and then staging a learning event for the entire home-based group.

These groups became the major source of identification with the class for class members. They provided opportunities for trying out new behaviors and conceptualizations and they afforded members an experience for developing an appreciation of some socio-psychological conditions and principles which have universality across helping professions. They also provided planned opportunities to try to solve problems and make decisions collaboratively with professionals from other fields and with different frames of reference.

Assignment of class members to the triads was accomplished following the second class session. Each triad contained a repre-

sentation of differences in professional identification, sex, and extent of academic and professional experience. Persons with known, well-established interpersonal conflicts were not assigned to the same triad. Following each weekly class session, for seven weeks, sealed envelopes were distributed, one to a triad, with a one- to two-hour-long discussion task enclosed. The envelopes were not to be opened until the time at which the triad held its once-per-week meeting outside of class.

The tasks were the same for each triad, but were constructed so as to help participants confront issues relevant to and congruent with the development of the total class experience. The work programmed for the triads was intended to provide all class members with an opportunity for a somewhat more intimate experience through which they might explore as-yet-undiscovered helping resources within themselves and thus free adult leadership potential. The discussion tasks were also designed so as to assist—sometimes obliquely and sometimes directly—triad members toward receiving feedback on blind spots in their philosophies, perceptions, values, and behaviors and toward sharing awarenesses of their own helping skills, limitations, and aspirations. For many class members the triad became an important, friendly and supportive source of strategy-planning and pre-testing of new helping behaviors. Triad meetings were held at times and places convenient to the triad.

By the time the seventh programmed session had been distributed, some triads were expressing desires to plan their own sessions.

Actually, a few had already initiated the planning of additional activities for themselves: observation of an adult evening class, a community organization meeting, and an interview by a counselor-in-training; preview of films; consultation with a resource person; and a two-triad discussion of a particular book. It was at this point that the instructor discontinued the programming of these sessions and, while affirming the availability of consultation on agenda-building and locating of resources, he suggested that all triads assess their further interests and build a tentative agenda of self-selected activities. From this point onward, much inter-triad consultation was activated as the triads acquired experiences with more and varying resources.

To make more concrete the nature of those tasks which had been programmed for the triads, the following two triad tasks are presented in their entirety. The first one (Figure 1) represents a more direct approach to experiencing and examining self as facilitator of a helping relationship. It was the third task assigned to triads. The second one (Figure 2) was designed to provide a less direct entry into an examination of own attitudes toward and perceptions of other adults as socially responsible people. It was the sixth task assigned to triads.

Reading carried out by class members was essentially of two kinds: (1) assigned journal articles which had been duplicated and were then distributed at the end of each session, sometimes to help draw semi-closure for that class session and sometimes to help

Figure 1

Third Task Assignment for Triads

Purpose:

The purpose of this session is to explore the question of what characteristics in people seem to limit how well others can work with them.

Procedure:

Two members converse; one member listens and records.

1. The two members who converse do so as follows: (a) One member helps the other think about, refine, and clarify for himself the very particular characteristics (attitudes and behaviors) in others which limit or inhibit his working relationship with those others. The one member helps the second member think this through by raising questions, reflecting responses, etc.; (b) The second member, who is being helped to think this through tries to describe and clarify his thoughts as well as he can so the helping member can acquire as genuine an understanding as possible.

2. The third member listens carefully to the responses of the second member and records accurately what the second member finalizes as the characteristics in others which limit his working relationship with them.

3. This procedure is repeated as many times as it takes for each person to be helped to think through the question. There should always be a person recording, a person helping, and a person being helped.

4. After all the above operations have been completed, the members should review the characteristics they have listed and begin to explore why these characteristics are inhibiting to working relationships—i.e., what do these characteristics in one person tend to initiate in another person?

Figure 2

Sixth Task Assignment for Triads

The leader of a group states the following. How should he feel about each item; how is he doing as the leader? Discuss and try to reach a consensus decision on each.

_____ Members address me no more formally than others in the group.

_____ Members express their real, at the moment, feelings about issues.

_____ If I am late in arriving, the members have not waited for me to begin the meeting but have gone ahead and started without me.

_____ Members openly disagree with me when they feel differently about things.

_____ Members address their remarks to the rest of the group rather than to me.

_____ The group makes decisions without using me as a final judge.

_____ Members speak up in meetings without asking to be recognized.

_____ Different members often direct the group's thinking, discussion and procedure.

_____ Whenever conflicts and disagreements arise, members deal with them openly.

_____ Members often accept ideas and information and are influenced by other members.

_____ Members draw out and question each other.

prepare for the following class session; (2) self-selected and self-assigned books from a long annotated bibliography. As the semester progressed, the journal articles were gradually assembled by class members into an eventual book of readings for the course. A list of books and names of the class members reading them was published and returned to the class. This list stimulated some spontaneous, participant-initiated, outside-of-class sharing of knowledge and provided a system for library book retrieval for class members. It also prompted the planning of a class session during which class members both shared book-based knowledge and purposively practiced consultant skills at helping another adult communicate and clarify his knowledge.

Many individual class members and a few triads sought consultation from the instructor, other University faculty and community persons, other class members and triads. In these contacts, the issues explored pertained to selection of books and other reading materials, personal goal-setting, frustrations associated with the less-directive approach to class structure, conflicts in current self-other relationships, past and contemplated problems in the back-home work setting, planning for and initiation of action research projects within back-home group and organizational settings.

A limited, microcosmic experience at organizational and community development was attempted by the establishment of ad hoc committees to study total group administrative and maintenance problems, to produce alternative recommendations, and to conduct

decision-making within the total group (regarding procedures for evaluation of learning, responsibilities and procedures for procurement and management of break-time refreshments, etc.).

agitated	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	calm
big	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	small
clear	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	hazy
deep	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	shallow
sour	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	sweet
weak	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	strong
fresh	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	stale
rugged	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	delicate
bright	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	dark
wide	_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____:_____	narrow

QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE READ VERY CAREFULLY BEFORE ANSWERING

Below is a list of possible statements about the behaviors of members of an adult group. How should the leader feel about these behaviors of members? After each statement, please check whether you think this is a favorable thing or an unfavorable thing; and then circle how sure you are about your decision. Do this for each and every statement.

* * * * * *

Group members address the leader no more formally than others in the group.

favorable____ unfavorable____

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE | I AM FAIRLY SURE | I AM QUITE SURE | I AM VERY SURE

Group members express their real, at the moment, feelings about issues.

favorable____ unfavorable____

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE | I AM FAIRLY SURE | I AM QUITE SURE | I AM VERY SURE

If the leader is late in arriving, the members have not waited for him but have gone ahead and started without him.

favorable____ unfavorable____

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE | I AM FAIRLY SURE | I AM QUITE SURE | I AM VERY SURE

Group members openly disagree with the leader when they feel differently about things.

favorable____ unfavorable____

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE | I AM FAIRLY SURE | I AM QUITE SURE | I AM VERY SURE

Group members address their remarks to the rest of the group rather than to the leader.

favorable____ unfavorable____.

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE	I AM FAIRLY SURE	I AM QUITE SURE	I AM VERY SURE

Group members make decisions without using the leader as a final judge.

favorable____ unfavorable____.

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE	I AM FAIRLY SURE	I AM QUITE SURE	I AM VERY SURE

Group members speak up without asking to be recognized.

favorable____ unfavorable____.

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE	I AM FAIRLY SURE	I AM QUITE SURE	I AM VERY SURE

Group members will handle the "problem behavior" in a member instead of leaving this to the leader.

favorable____ unfavorable____.

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE	I AM FAIRLY SURE	I AM QUITE SURE	I AM VERY SURE

Different group members often direct the group's thinking, discussion and procedure.

favorable____ unfavorable____.

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE	I AM FAIRLY SURE	I AM QUITE SURE	I AM VERY SURE

Whenever conflicts and disagreements arise, members deal with them openly.

favorable____ unfavorable____

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE	I AM FAIRLY SURE	I AM QUITE SURE	I AM VERY SURE

Group members often accept ideas and information and are influenced by other members.

favorable____ unfavorable____

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE	I AM FAIRLY SURE	I AM QUITE SURE	I AM VERY SURE

Group members draw out and question each other.

favorable____ unfavorable____

I AM ONLY SLIGHTLY SURE	I AM FAIRLY SURE	I AM QUITE SURE	I AM VERY SURE

Findings

Table 1

Change in Positiveness of Perception of Self

Pre-mean	=	48.24	
			t = 2.13
Post-mean	=	51.48	
			p < .05

N = 50 Highest Possible Score = 70

Table 2

Change in Readiness to Share Leadership with Others

Pre-mean	=	80.36	
			t = 2.87
Post-mean	=	86.04	
			p = .01

N = 50 Highest Possible Score = 96

Table 3

Influence of Perception of Self on Change in Readiness to Share Leadership Services with Others

Initial Positiveness of Self Perception	Change in Readiness to Share Leadership (Mean % Change Between Pre- and Post-Scores)	
High (27)	51.73%	
		t = .45
Low (23)	46.35%	
		p = N.S.

N = 50 Range of Individual Changes = -22% thru + 100%

Implications

1. A university course can substantially influence the self confidence and self esteem of students to the degree that they are ready to risk a style of relationship which was somewhat alien and threatening to them previously.

2. Larger-size classes need not preclude personalized learning experiences. Designs involving re-grouping, multiple group memberships, and programmed micro-group activities can allow students to experience the impact of the many and varied helping resources within the total class.

3. Pre- and post-data collection in university classes can provide an important opportunity to combine teaching and research interests, and to receive feedback on the meaning of experimental inputs in teaching procedure.

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